CHAPTER THE SIXTH

THE ADVENTUROUS AFTERNOON

§1

You will perhaps remember that before I fell into this extensive digression about Lady Harman's upbringing, we had got to the entry of Mrs. Sawbridge into the house bearing a plunder of Sir Isaac's best roses. She interrupted a conversation of some importance. Those roses at this point are still unwithered and fragrant, and moreover they are arranged according to Mrs. Sawbridge's ideas of elegance about Sir Isaac's home.... And Sir Isaac, when that conversation could be renewed, categorically forbade Lady Harman to go to Lady Beach-Mandarin's lunch and Lady Harman went to Lady Beach-Mandarin's lunch.

She had some peculiar difficulties in getting to that lunch.

It is necessary to tell certain particulars. They are particulars that will distress the delicacy of Mrs. Sawbridge unspeakably if ever she chances to read this book. But a story has to be told. You see Sir Isaac Harman had never considered it advisable to give his wife a private allowance. Whatever she wished to have, he maintained, she could have. The bill would afterwards be paid by his cheque on the first day of the month following the receipt of the bill. He found a generous pleasure in

writing these cheques, and Lady Harman was magnificently housed, fed and adorned. Moreover, whenever she chose to ask for money he gave her money, usually double of what she demanded,--and often a kiss or so into the bargain. But after he had forbidden her to go to Lady Beach-Mandarin's so grave an estrangement ensued that she could not ask him for money. A door closed between them. And the crisis had come at an unfortunate moment. She possessed the sum of five shillings and eightpence.

She perceived quite early that this shortness of money would greatly embarrass the rebellion she contemplated. She was exceptionally ignorant of most worldly things, but she knew there was never yet a campaign without a war chest. She felt entitled to money....

She planned several times to make a demand for replenishment with a haughty dignity; the haughty dignity was easy enough to achieve, but the demand was not. A sensitive dread of her mother's sympathetic curiosity barred all thoughts of borrowing in that direction,--she and her mother "never discussed money matters." She did not want to get Georgina into further trouble. And besides, Georgina was in Devonshire.

Even to get to Lady Beach-Mandarin's became difficult under these circumstances. She knew that Clarence, though he would take her into the country quite freely, had been instructed, on account of Sir Isaac's expressed dread of any accident happening to her while alone, not to plunge with her into the vortex of London traffic. Only under direct

orders from Sir Isaac would Clarence take her down Putney Hill; though she might go up and away--to anywhere. She knew nothing of pawnshops or any associated methods of getting cash advances, and the possibility of using the telephone to hire an automobile never occurred to her. But she was fully resolved to go. She had one advantage in the fact that Sir Isaac didn't know the precise date of the disputed engagement. When that arrived she spent a restless morning and dressed herself at last with great care. She instructed Peters, her maid, who participated in these preparations with a mild astonishment, that she was going out to lunch, asked her to inform Mrs. Sawbridge of the fact and, outwardly serene, made a bolt for it down the staircase and across the hall. The great butler appeared; she had never observed how like a large note of interrogation his forward contours could be.

"I shall be out to lunch, Snagsby," she said, and went past him into the sunshine.

She left a discreetly astonished Snagsby behind her.

("Now where are we going out to lunch?" said Snagsby presently to Peters.

"I've never known her so particular with her clothes," said the maid.

"Never before--not in the same way; it's something new and special to this affair," Snagsby reflected, "I wonder now if Sir Isaac...."

"One can't help observing things," said the maid, after a pause. "Mute though we be.")

Lady Harman had the whole five and eightpence with her. She had managed to keep it intact in her jewel case, declaring she had no change when any small demands were made on her.

With an exhilaration so great that she wanted sorely to laugh aloud she walked out through her big open gates and into the general publicity of Putney Hill. Why had she not done as much years ago? How long she had been, working up to this obvious thing! She hadn't been out in such complete possession of herself since she had been a schoolgirl. She held up a beautifully gloved hand to a private motor-car going downhill and then to an engaged taxi going up, and then with a slightly dashed feeling, picked up her skirt and walked observantly downhill. Her reason dispelled a transitory impression that these two vehicles were on Sir Isaac's side against her.

There was quite a nice taxi on the rank at the bottom of the hill. The driver, a pleasant-looking young man in a white cap, seemed to have been waiting for her in particular; he met her timid invitation halfway and came across the road to her and jumped down and opened the door. He took her instructions as though they were after his own heart, and right in front of her as she sat was a kind of tin cornucopia full of artificial flowers that seemed like a particular attention to her. His fare was two

and eightpence and she gave him four shillings. He seemed quite gratified by her largesse, his manner implied he had always thought as much of her, from first to last their relations had been those of sunny contentment, and it was only as she ascended the steps of Lady Beach-Mandarin's portico, that it occurred to her that she now had insufficient money for an automobile to take her home. But there were railways and buses and all sorts of possibilities; the day was an adventure; and she entered the drawing-room with a brow that was beautifully unruffled. She wanted to laugh still; it animated her eyes and lips with the pleasantest little stir you can imagine.

"A-a-a-a-a-h!" cried Lady Beach-Mandarin in a high note, and threw out--it had an effect of being quite a number of arms--as though she was one of those brass Indian goddesses one sees.

Lady Harman felt taken in at once to all that capacious bosom involved and contained....

§2

It was quite an amusing lunch. But any lunch would have been amusing to Lady Harman in the excitement of her first act of deliberate disobedience. She had never been out to lunch alone in all her life before; she experienced a kind of scared happiness, she felt like someone at Lourdes who has just thrown away crutches. She was seated

between a pink young man with an eyeglass whose place was labelled "Bertie Trevor" and who was otherwise unexplained, and Mr. Brumley. She was quite glad to see Mr. Brumley again, and no doubt her eyes showed it. She had hoped to see him. Miss Sharsper was sitting nearly opposite to her, a real live novelist pecking observations out of life as a hen pecks seeds amidst scenery, and next beyond was a large-headed inattentive fluffy person who was Mr. Keystone the well-known critic. And there was Agatha Alimony under a rustling vast hat of green-black cock's feathers next to Sir Markham Crosby, with whom she had been having an abusive controversy in the Times and to whom quite elaborately she wouldn't speak, and there was Lady Viping with her lorgnette and Adolphus Blenker, Horatio's younger and if possible more gentlemanly brother--Horatio of the Old Country Gazette that is--sole reminder that there was such a person as Sir Isaac in the world. Lady Beach-Mandarin's mother and the Swiss governess and the tall but retarded daughter, Phyllis, completed the party. The reception was lively and cheering; Lady Beach-Mandarin enfolded her guests in generosities and kept them all astir like a sea-swell under a squadron, and she introduced Lady Harman to Miss Alimony by public proclamation right across the room because there were two lavish tables of bric-à-brac, a marble bust of old Beach-Mandarin and most of the rest of the party in the way. And at the table conversation was like throwing bread, you never knew whom you might hit or who might hit you. (But Lady Beach-Mandarin produced an effect of throwing whole loaves.) Bertie Trevor was one of those dancing young men who talk to a woman as though they were giving a dog biscuits, and mostly it was Mr. Brumley who did

such talking as reached Lady Harman's ear.

Mr. Brumley was in very good form that day. He had contrived to remind her of all their Black Strand talk while they were still eating Petites Bouchées à la Reine. "Have you found that work yet?" he asked and carried her mind to the core of her situation. Then they were snatched up into a general discussion of Bazaars. Sir Markham spoke of a great bazaar that was to be held on behalf of one of the many Shakespear Theatre movements that were then so prevalent. Was Lady Beach-Mandarin implicated? Was anyone? He told of novel features in contemplation. He generalized about bazaars and, with an air of having forgotten the presence of Miss Alimony, glanced at the Suffrage Bazaar--it was a season of bazaars. He thought poorly of the Suffrage Bazaar. The hostess intervened promptly with anecdotes of her own cynical daring as a Bazaar-seller, Miss Sharsper offered fragments of a reminiscence about signing one of her own books for a Bookstall, Blenker told a well-known Bazaar anecdote brightly and well, and the impending skirmish was averted.

While the Bazaar talk still whacked to and fro about the table Mr. Brumley got at Lady Harman's ear again. "Rather tantalizing these meetings at table," he said. "It's like trying to talk while you swim in a rough sea...."

Then Lady Beach-Mandarin intervened with demands for support for her own particular Bazaar project and they were eating salad before there was a

chance of another word between them. "I must confess that when I want to talk to people I like to get them alone," said Mr. Brumley, and gave form to thoughts that were already on the verge of crystallization in her own mind. She had been recalling that she had liked his voice before, noting something very kindly and thoughtful and brotherly about his right profile and thinking how much an hour's talk with him would help to clear up her ideas.

"But it's so difficult to get one alone," said Lady Harman, and suddenly an idea of the utmost daring and impropriety flashed into her mind. She was on the verge of speaking it forthwith and then didn't, she met something in his eye that answered her own and then Lady Beach-Mandarin was foaming over them like a dam-burst over an American town.

"What do you think, Mr. Brumley?" demanded Lady Beach-Mandarin.

"?"

"About Sir Markham's newspaper symposium. They asked him what allowance he gave his wife. Sent a prepaid reply telegram."

"But he hasn't got a wife!"

"They don't stick at a little thing like that," said Sir Markham grimly.

"I think a husband and wife ought to have everything in common like the

early Christians," said Lady Beach-Mandarin. "We always did," and so got the discussion afloat again off the sandbank of Mr. Brumley's inattention.

It was quite a good discussion and Lady Harman contributed an exceptionally alert and intelligent silence. Sir Markham distrusted Lady Beach-Mandarin's communism and thought that anyhow it wouldn't do for a financier or business man. He favoured an allowance. "So did Sir Joshua," said the widow Viping. This roused Agatha Alimony. "Allowance indeed!" she cried. "Is a wife to be on no better footing than a daughter? The whole question of a wife's financial autonomy needs reconsidering...."

Adolphus Blenker became learned and lucid upon Pin-money and dowry and the customs of savage tribes, and Mr. Brumley helped with corroboration....

Mr. Brumley managed to say just one other thing to Lady Harman before the lunch was over. It struck her for a moment as being irrelevant. "The gardens at Hampton Court," he said, "are delightful just now. Have you seen them? Autumnal fires. All the September perennials lifting their spears in their last great chorus. It's the Götterdämmerung of the year."

She was going out of the room before she appreciated his possible intention.

Lady Beach-Mandarin delegated Sir Markham to preside over the men's cigars and bounced and slapped her four ladies upstairs to the drawing-room. Her mother disappeared and so did Phyllis and the governess. Lady Harman heard a large aside to Lady Viping: "Isn't she perfectly lovely?" glanced to discover the lorgnette in appreciative action, and then found herself drifting into a secluded window-seat and a duologue with Miss Agatha Alimony. Miss Alimony was one of that large and increasing number of dusky, grey-eyed ladies who go through life with an air of darkly incomprehensible significance. She led off Lady Harman as though she took her away to reveal unheard-of mysteries and her voice was a contralto undertone that she emphasized in some inexplicable way by the magnetic use of her eyes. Her hat of cock's feathers which rustled like familiar spirits greatly augmented the profundity of her effect. As she spoke she glanced guardedly at the other ladies at the end of the room and from first to last she seemed undecided in her own mind whether she was a conspirator or a prophetess. She had heard of Lady Harman before, she had been longing impatiently to talk to her all through the lunch. "You are just what we want," said Agatha. "What who want?" asked Lady Harman, struggling against the hypnotic influence of her interlocutor. "We," said Miss Agatha, "the Cause. The G.S.W.S.

"We want just such people as you," she repeated, and began in panting rhetorical sentences to urge the militant cause.

For her it was manifestly a struggle against "the Men." Miss Alimony had no doubts of her sex. It had nothing to learn, nothing to be forgiven, it was compact of obscured and persecuted marvels, it needed only revelation. "They know Nothing," she said of the antagonist males, bringing deep notes out of the melodious caverns of her voice; "they know Nothing of the Deeper Secrets of Woman's Nature." Her discourse of a general feminine insurrection fell in very closely with the spirit of Lady Harman's private revolt. "We want the Vote," said Agatha, "and we want the Vote because the Vote means Autonomy. And then----"

She paused voluminously. She had already used that word "Autonomy" at the lunch table and it came to her hearer to supply a long-felt want. Now she poured meanings into it, and Lady Harman with each addition realized more clearly that it was still a roomy sack for more. "A woman should be absolute mistress of herself," said Miss Alimony, "absolute mistress of her person. She should be free to develop----"

Germinating phrases these were in Lady Harman's ear.

She wanted to know about the Suffrage movement from someone less generously impatient than Georgina, for Georgina always lost her temper about it and to put it fairly ranted, this at any rate was serene and confident, and she asked tentative ill-formed questions and felt her way among Miss Alimony's profundities. She had her doubts, her instinctive doubts about this campaign of violence, she doubted its wisdom, she doubted its rightness, and she perceived, but she found it difficult to

express her perception, that Miss Alimony wasn't so much answering her objections as trying to swamp her with exalted emotion. And if there was any flaw whatever in her attention to Miss Alimony's stirring talk, it was because she was keeping a little look-out in the tail of her eye for the reappearance of the men, and more particularly for the reappearance of Mr. Brumley with whom she had a peculiar feeling of uncompleted relations. And at last the men came and she caught his glance and saw that her feeling was reciprocated.

She was presently torn from Agatha, who gasped with pain at the parting and pursued her with a sedulous gaze as a doctor might watch an injected patient, she parted with Lady Beach-Mandarin with a vast splash of enthusiasm and mutual invitations, and Lady Viping came and pressed her to come to dinner and rapped her elbow with her lorgnette to emphasize her invitation. And Lady Harman after a still moment for reflection athwart which the word Autonomy flickered, accepted this invitation also.

§3

Mr. Brumley hovered for a few moments in the hall conversing with Lady Beach-Mandarin's butler, whom he had known for some years and helped about a small investment, and who was now being abjectly polite and grateful to him for his attention. It gave Mr. Brumley a nice feudal feeling to establish and maintain such relationships. The furry-eyed boy

fumbled with the sticks and umbrellas in the background and wondered if he too would ever climb to these levels of respectful gilt-tipped friendliness. Mr. Brumley hovered the more readily because he knew Lady Harman was with the looking-glass in the little parlour behind the dining-room on her way to the outer world. At last she emerged. It was instantly manifest to Mr. Brumley that she had expected to find him there. She smiled frankly at him, with the faintest admission of complicity in her smile.

"Taxi, milady?" said the butler.

She seemed to reflect. "No, I will walk." She hesitated over a glove button. "Mr. Brumley, is there a Tube station near here?"

"Not two minutes. But can't I perhaps take you in a taxi?"

"I'd rather walk."

"I will show you----"

He found himself most agreeably walking off with her.

Still more agreeable things were to follow for Mr. Brumley.

She appeared to meditate upon a sudden idea. She disregarded some conversational opening of his that he forgot in the instant. "Mr.

Brumley," she said, "I didn't intend to go directly home."

"I'm altogether at your service," said Mr. Brumley.

"At least," said Lady Harman with that careful truthfulness of hers, "it occurred to me during lunch that I wouldn't go directly home."

Mr. Brumley reined in an imagination that threatened to bolt with him.

"I want," said Lady Harman, "to go to Kensington Gardens, I think. This can't be far from Kensington Gardens--and I want to sit there on a green chair and--meditate--and afterwards I want to find a tube railway or something that will take me back to Putney. There is really no need for me to go directly home.... It's very stupid of me but I don't know my way about London as a rational creature should do. So will you take me and put me in a green chair and--tell me how afterwards I can find the Tube and get home? Do you mind?"

"All my time, so long as you want it, is at your service," said Mr. Brumley with convincing earnestness. "And it's not five minutes to the gardens. And afterwards a taxi-cab----"

"No," said Lady Harman mindful of her one-and-eightpence, "I prefer a tube. But that we can talk about later. You're sure, Mr. Brumley, I'm not invading your time?"

"I wish you could see into my mind," said Mr. Brumley.

She became almost barefaced. "It is so true," she said, "that at lunch one can't really talk to anyone. And I've so wanted to talk to you. Ever since we met before."

Mr. Brumley conveyed an unfeigned delight.

"Since then," said Lady Harman, "I've read your Euphemia books." Then after a little unskilful pause, "again." Then she blushed and added, "I had read one of them, you know, before."

"Exactly," he said with an infinite helpfulness.

"And you seem so sympathetic, so understanding. I feel that all sorts of things that are muddled in my mind would come clear if I could have a really Good Talk. To you...."

They were now through the gates approaching the Albert Memorial. Mr. Brumley was filled with an idea so desirable that it made him fear to suggest it.

"Of course we can talk very comfortably here," he said, "under these great trees. But I do so wish----Have you seen those great borders at Hampton Court? The whole place is glowing, and in such sunshine as this----A taxi--will take us there under the hour. If you are free until

half-past five."

Why shouldn't she?

The proposal seemed so outrageous to all the world of Lady Harman that in her present mood she felt it was her duty in the cause of womanhood to nerve herself and accept it....

"I mustn't be later than half-past five."

"We could snatch a glimpse of it all and be back before then."

"In that case----It would be very agreeable."

(Why shouldn't she? It would no doubt make Sir Isaac furiously angry--if he heard of it. But it was the sort of thing other women of her class did; didn't all the novels testify? She had a perfect right----

And besides, Mr. Brumley was so entirely harmless.)

§4

It had been Lady Harman's clear intention to have a luminous and illuminating discussion of the peculiar difficulties and perplexities of

her position with Mr. Brumley. Since their first encounter this idea had grown up in her mind. She was one of those women who turn instinctively to men and away from women for counsel. There was to her perception something wise and kindly and reassuring in him; she felt that he had lived and suffered and understood and that he was ready to help other people to live; his heart she knew from his published works was buried with his dead Euphemia, and he seemed as near a thing to a brother and a friend as she was ever likely to meet. She wanted to tell him all this and then to broach her teeming and tangled difficulties, about her own permissible freedoms, about her social responsibilities, about Sir Isaac's business. But now as their taxi dodged through the traffic of Kensington High Street and went on its way past Olympia and so out westwards, she found it extremely difficult to fix her mind upon the large propositions with which it had been her intention to open. Do as she would to feel that this was a momentous occasion, she could not suppress, she could not ignore an obstinate and entirely undignified persuasion that she was having a tremendous lark. The passing vehicles, various motors, omnibuses, vans, carriages, the thronging pedestrians, the shops and houses, were all so distractingly interesting that at last she had to put it fairly to herself whether she hadn't better resign herself to the sensations of the present and reserve that sustained discussion for an interval she foresaw as inevitable on some comfortable seat under great trees at Hampton Court. You cannot talk well and penetratingly about fundamental things when you are in a not too well-hung taxi which is racing to get ahead of a vast red motor-omnibus....

With a certain discretion Mr. Brumley had instructed the chauffeur to cross the river not at Putney but at Hammersmith, and so they went by Barnes station and up a still almost rural lane into Richmond Park, and there suddenly they were among big trees and bracken and red deer and it might have been a hundred miles from London streets. Mr. Brumley directed the driver to make a detour that gave them quite all the best of the park.

The mind of Mr. Brumley was also agreeably excited and dispersed on this occasion. It was an occasion of which he had been dreaming very frequently of late, he had invented quite remarkable dialogues during those dreams, and now he too was conversationally inadequate and with a similar feeling of unexpected adventure. He was now no more ready to go to the roots of things than Lady Harman. He talked on the way down chiefly of the route they were following, of the changes in the London traffic due to motor traction and of the charm and amenity of Richmond Park. And it was only after they had arrived at Hampton Court and dismissed the taxi and spent some time upon the borders, that they came at last to a seat under a grove beside a long piece of water bearing water lilies, and sat down and made a beginning with the Good Talk. Then indeed she tried to gather together the heads of her perplexity and Mr. Brumley did his best to do justice to confidence she reposed in him....

It wasn't at all the conversation he had dreamt of; it was halting, it was inconclusive, it was full of a vague dissatisfaction.

The roots of this dissatisfaction lay perhaps more than anything else in her inattention to him--how shall I say it?--as Him. Hints have been conveyed to the reader already that for Mr. Brumley the universe was largely a setting, a tangle, a maze, a quest enshrining at the heart of it and adumbrating everywhere, a mystical Her, and his experience of this world had pointed him very definitely to the conclusion that for that large other half of mankind which is woman, the quality of things was reciprocal and centred, for all the appearances and pretences of other interests, in--Him. And he was disposed to believe that the other things in life, not merely the pomp and glories but the faiths and ambitions and devotions, were all demonstrably little more than posings and dressings of this great duality. A large part of his own interests and of the interests of the women he knew best, was the sustained and in some cases recurrent discovery and elaboration of lights and glimpses of Him or Her as the case might be, in various definite individuals; and it was a surprise to him, it perplexed him to find that this lovely person, so beautifully equipped for those mutual researches which constituted, he felt, the heart of life, was yet completely in her manner unaware of this primary sincerity and looking quite simply, as it were, over him and through him at such things as the ethics of the baking, confectionery and refreshment trade and the limits of individual responsibility in these matters. The conclusion that she was "unawakened" was inevitable.

The dream of "awakening" this Sleeping Beauty associated itself in a

logical sequence with his interpretations. I do not say that such thoughts were clear in Mr. Brumley's mind, they were not, but into this shape the forms of his thoughts fell. Such things dimly felt below the clear level of consciousness were in him. And they gave his attempt to take up and answer the question that perplexed her, something of the quality of an attempt to clothe and serve hidden purposes. It could not but be evident to him that the effort of Lady Harman to free herself a little from her husband's circumvallation and to disentangle herself a little from the realities of his commercial life, might lead to such a liberation as would leave her like a nascent element ready to recombine. And it was entirely in the vein of this drift of thought in him that he should resolve upon an assiduous proximity against that moment of release and awakening....

I do not do Mr. Brumley as the human lover justice if I lead you to suppose that he plotted thus clearly and calculatingly. Yet all this was in his mind. All this was in Mr. Brumley, but it wasn't Mr. Brumley. Presented with it as a portrait of his mind, he would have denied it indignantly--and, knowing it was there, have grown a little flushed in his denials. Quite equally in his mind was a simple desire to please her, to do what she wished, to help her because she wanted help. And a quite keen desire to be clean and honest about her and everything connected with her, for his own sake as well as for her sake--for the sake of the relationship....

So you have Mr. Brumley on the green seat under the great trees at

Hampton Court, in his neat London clothes, his quite becoming silk-hat, above his neatly handsome and intelligent profile, with his gloves in his hand and one arm over the seat back, going now very earnestly and thoughtfully into the question of the social benefit of the International Bread and Cake Stores and whether it was possible for her to "do anything" to repair any wrongs that might have arisen out of that organization, and you will understand why there is a little flush in his cheek and why his sentences are a trifle disconnected and tentative and why his eye wanders now to the soft raven tresses about Lady Harman's ear, now to the sweet movement of her speaking lips and now to the gracious droop of her pose as she sits forward, elbow upon crossed knee and chin on glove, and jabs her parasol at the ground in her unaccustomed efforts to explain and discuss the difficulties of her position.

And you will understand too why it is that he doesn't deal with the question before him so simply and impartially as he seems to do. Obscuring this extremely interesting problem of a woman growing to man-like sense of responsibility in her social consequences, is the dramatic proclivity that makes him see all this merely as something which must necessarily weaken Lady Harman's loyalty and qualify her submission to Sir Isaac, that makes him want to utilize it and develop it in that direction....

§5

Moreover so complex is the thought of man, there was also another stream of mental activity flowing in the darker recesses of Mr. Brumley's mind. Unobtrusively he was trying to count the money in his pockets and make certain estimates.

It had been his intention to replenish his sovereign purse that afternoon at his club and he was only reminded of this abandoned plan when he paid off his taxi at the gates of Hampton Court. The fare was nine and tenpence and the only piece of gold he had was a half-sovereign. But there was a handful of loose silver in his trouser pocket and so the fare and tip were manageable. "Will you be going back, sir?" asked the driver.

And Mr. Brumley reflected too briefly and committed a fatal error. "No," he said with his mind upon that loose silver. "We shall go back by train."

Now it is the custom with taxi-cabs that take people to such outlying and remote places as Hampton Court, to be paid off and to wait loyally until their original passengers return. Thereby the little machine is restrained from ticking out twopences which should go in the main to the absent proprietor, and a feeling of mutuality is established between the driver and his fare. But of course this cab being released presently found another passenger and went away....

I have written in vain if I have not conveyed to you that Mr. Brumley was a gentleman of great and cultivated delicacy, that he liked the seemly and handsome side of things and dreaded the appearance of any flaw upon his prosperity as only a man trained in an English public school can do. It was intolerable to think of any hitch in this happy excursion which was to establish he knew not what confidence between himself and Lady Harman. From first to last he felt it had to go with an air--and what was the first class fare from Hampton Court to Putney--which latter station he believed was on the line from Hampton Court to London--and could one possibly pretend it was unnecessary to have tea? And so while Lady Harman talked about her husband's business--"our business" she called it--and shrank from ever saying anything more about the more intimate question she had most in mind, the limits to a wife's obedience, Mr. Brumley listened with these financial solicitudes showing through his expression and giving it a quality of intensity that she found remarkably reassuring. And once or twice they made him miss points in her remarks that forced him back upon that very inferior substitute for the apt answer, a judicious "Um."

(It would be quite impossible to go without tea, he decided. He himself wanted tea quite badly. He would think better when he had had some tea....)

The crisis came at tea. They had tea at the inn upon the green that struck Mr. Brumley as being most likely to be cheap and which he pretended to choose for some trivial charm about the windows. And it

wasn't cheap, and when at last Mr. Brumley was faced by the little slip of the bill and could draw his money from his pocket and look at it, he knew the worst and the worst was worse than he had expected. The bill was five shillings (Should he dispute it? Too ugly altogether, a dispute with a probably ironical waiter!) and the money in his hand amounted to four shillings and sixpence.

He acted surprise with the waiter's eye upon him. (Should he ask for credit? They might be frightfully disagreeable in such a cockney resort as this.) "Tut, tut," said Mr. Brumley, and then--a little late for it--resorted to and discovered the emptiness of his sovereign purse. He realized that this was out of the picture at this stage, felt his ears and nose and cheeks grow hot and pink. The waiter's colleague across the room became interested in the proceedings.

"I had no idea," said Mr. Brumley, which was a premeditated falsehood.

"Is anything the matter?" asked Lady Harman with a sisterly interest.

"My dear Lady Harman, I find myself----Ridiculous position. Might I borrow half a sovereign?"

He felt sure that the two waiters exchanged glances. He looked at them,--a mistake again--and got hotter.

"Oh!" said Lady Harman and regarded him with frank amusement in her

eyes. The thing struck her at first in the light of a joke. "I've only got one-and-eightpence. I didn't expect----"

She blushed as beautifully as ever. Then she produced a small but plutocratic-looking purse and handed it to him.

"Most remarkable--inconvenient," said Mr. Brumley, opening the precious thing and extracting a shilling. "That will do," he said and dismissed the waiter with a tip of sixpence. Then with the open purse still in his hand, he spent much of his remaining strength trying to look amused and unembarrassed, feeling all the time that with his flushed face and in view of all the circumstances of the case he must be really looking very silly and fluffy.

"It's really most inconvenient," he remarked.

"I never thought of the--of this. It was silly of me," said Lady Harman.

"Oh no! Oh dear no! The silliness I can assure you is all mine. I can't tell you how entirely apologetic----Ridiculous fix. And after I had persuaded you to come here."

"Still we were able to pay," she consoled him.

"But you have to get home!"

She hadn't so far thought of that. It brought Sir Isaac suddenly into the picture. "By half-past five," she said with just the faintest flavour of interrogation.

Mr. Brumley looked at his watch. It was ten minutes to five.

"Waiter," he said, "how do the trains run from here to Putney?"

"I don't think, sir, that we have any trains from here to Putney----"

An A.B.C. Railway Guide was found and Mr. Brumley learnt for the first time that Putney and Hampton Court are upon two distinct and separate and, as far as he could judge by the time-table, mutually hostile branches of the South Western Railway, and that at the earliest they could not get to Putney before six o'clock.

Mr. Brumley was extremely disconcerted. He perceived that he ought to have kept his taxi. It amounted almost to a debt of honour to deliver this lady secure and untarnished at her house within the next hour. But this reflection did not in the least degree assist him to carry it out and as a matter of fact Mr. Brumley became flurried and did not carry it out. He was not used to being without money, it unnerved him, and he gave way to a kind of hectic savoir faire. He demanded a taxi of the waiter. He tried to evolve a taxi by will power alone. He went out with Lady Harman and back towards the gates of Hampton Court to look for taxis. Then it occurred to him that they might be losing the 5.25 up. So

they hurried over the bridge of the station.

He had a vague notion that he would be able to get tickets on credit at the booking office if he presented his visiting card. But the clerk in charge seemed to find something uncongenial in his proposal. He did not seem to like what he saw of Mr. Brumley through his little square window and Mr. Brumley found something slighting and unpleasant in his manner. It was one of those little temperamental jars which happen to men of delicate sensibilities and Mr. Brumley tried to be reassuringly overbearing in his manner and then lost his temper and was threatening and so wasted precious moments what time Lady Harman waited on the platform, with a certain shadow of doubt falling upon her confidence in him, and watched the five-twenty-five gather itself together and start Londonward. Mr. Brumley came out of the ticket office resolved to travel without tickets and carry things through with a high hand just as it became impossible to do so by that train, and then I regret to say he returned for some further haughty passages with the ticket clerk upon the duty of public servants to point out such oversights as his, that led to repartee and did nothing to help Lady Harman on her homeward way.

Then he discovered a current time-table and learnt that now even were all the ticket difficulties over-ridden he could not get Lady Harman to Putney before twenty minutes past seven, so completely is the South Western Railway not organized for conveying people from Hampton Court to Putney. He explained this as well as he could to Lady Harman, and then led her out of the station in another last desperate search for a taxi.

"We can always come back for that next train," he said. "It doesn't go for half an hour."

"I cannot blame myself sufficiently," he said for the eighth or ninth time....

It was already well past a quarter to six before Mr. Brumley bethought himself of the London County Council tramcars that run from the palace gates. Along these an ample four-pennyworth was surely possible and at the end would be taxis----There must be taxis. The tram took them--but oh! how slowly it seemed!--to Hammersmith by a devious route through interminable roads and streets, and long before they reached that spot twilight had passed into darkness, and all the streets and shops were flowering into light and the sense of night and lateness was very strong. After they were seated in the tram a certain interval of silence came between them and then Lady Harman laughed and Mr. Brumley laughed--there was no longer any need for him to be energetic and fussy--and they began to have that feeling of adventurous amusement which comes on the further side of desperation. But beneath the temporary elation Lady Harman was a prey to grave anxieties and Mr. Brumley could not help thinking he had made a tremendous ass of himself in that ticket clerk dispute....

At Hammersmith they got out, two quite penniless travellers, and after some anxious moments found a taxi. It took them to Putney Hill. Lady

Harman descended at the outer gates of her home and walked up the drive in the darkness while Mr. Brumley went on to his club and solvency again. It was five minutes past eight when he entered the hall of his club....

§6

It had been Lady Harman's original intention to come home before four, to have tea with her mother and to inform her husband when he returned from the city of her entirely dignified and correct disobedience to his absurd prohibitions. Then he would have bullied at a disadvantage, she would have announced her intention of dining with Lady Viping and making the various calls and expeditions for which she had arranged and all would have gone well. But you see how far accident and a spirit of enterprise may take a lady from so worthy a plan, and when at last she returned to the Victorian baronial home in Putney it was very nearly eight and the house blazed with crisis from pantry to nursery. Even the elder three little girls, who were accustomed to be kissed goodnight by their "boofer muvver," were still awake and--catching the subtle influence of the atmosphere of dismay about them--in tears. The very under-housemaids were saying: "Where ever can her ladyship 'ave got to?"

Sir Isaac had come home that day at an unusually early hour and with a peculiar pinched expression that filled even Snagsby with apprehensive

alertness. Sir Isaac had in fact returned in a state of quite unwonted venom. He had come home early because he wished to vent it upon Ellen, and her absence filled him with something of that sensation one has when one puts out a foot for the floor and instead a step drops one down--it seems abysmally.

"But where's she gone, Snagsby?"

"Her ladyship said to lunch, Sir Isaac," said Snagsby.

"Good gracious! Where?"

"Her ladyship didn't say, Sir Isaac."

"But where? Where the devil----?"

"I have--'ave no means whatever of knowing, Sir Isaac."

He had a defensive inspiration.

"Perhaps Mrs. Sawbridge, Sir Isaac...."

Mrs. Sawbridge was enjoying the sunshine upon the lawn. She sat in the most comfortable garden chair, held a white sunshade overhead, had the last new novel by Mrs. Humphry Ward upon her lap, and was engaged in trying not to wonder where her daughter might be. She beheld with a

distinct blenching of the spirit Sir Isaac advancing towards her. She wondered more than ever where Ellen might be.

"Here!" cried her son-in-law. "Where's Ellen gone?"

Mrs. Sawbridge with an affected off-handedness was sure she hadn't the faintest idea.

"Then you ought to have," said Isaac. "She ought to be at home."

Mrs. Sawbridge's only reply was to bridle slightly.

"Where's she got to? Where's she gone? Haven't you any idea at all?"

"I was not favoured by Ellen's confidence," said Mrs. Sawbridge.

"But you ought to know," cried Sir Isaac. "She's your daughter. Don't you know anything of either of your daughters. I suppose you don't care where they are, either of them, or what mischief they're up to. Here's a man--comes home early to his tea--and no wife! After hearing all I've done at the club."

Mrs. Sawbridge stood up in order to be more dignified than a seated position permitted.

"It is scarcely my business, Sir Isaac," she said, "to know of the

movements of your wife."

"Nor Georgina's apparently either. Good God! I'd have given a hundred pounds that this shouldn't have happened!"

"If you must speak to me, Sir Isaac, will you please kindly refrain from--from the deity----"

"Oh! shut it!" said Sir Isaac, blazing up to violent rudeness. "Why! Don't you know, haven't you an idea? The infernal foolery! Those tickets. She got those women----Look here, if you go walking away with your nose in the air before I've done----Look here! Mrs. Sawbridge, you listen to me----Georgina. I'm speaking of Georgina."

The lady was walking now swiftly and stiffly towards the house, her face very pale and drawn, and Sir Isaac hurrying beside her in a white fury of expostulation. "I tell you," he cried, "Georgina----"

There was something maddeningly incurious about her. He couldn't understand why she didn't even pause to hear what Georgina had done and what he had to say about it. A person so wrapped up in her personal and private dignity makes a man want to throw stones. Perhaps she knew of Georgina's misdeeds. Perhaps she sympathized....

A sense of the house windows checked his pursuit of her ear. "Then go," he said to her retreating back. "Go! I don't care if you go for good.

I don't care if you go altogether. If you hadn't had the upbringing of these two girls----"

She was manifestly out of earshot and in full yet almost queenly flight for the house. He wanted to say things about her. To someone. He was already saying things to the garden generally. What does one marry a wife for? His mind came round to Ellen again. Where had she got to? Even if she had gone out to lunch, it was time she was back. He went to his study and rang for Snagsby.

"Lady Harman back yet?" he asked grimly.

"No, Sir Isaac."

"Why isn't she back?"

Snagsby did his best. "Perhaps, Sir Isaac, her ladyship has experienced--'as hexperienced a naxident."

Sir Isaac stared at that idea for a moment. Then he thought, 'Someone would have telephoned,' "No," he said, "she's out. That's where she is. And I suppose I can wait here, as well as I can until she chooses to come home. Degenerate foolish nonsense!..."

He whistled between his teeth like an escape of steam. Snagsby, after the due pause of attentiveness, bowed respectfully and withdrew....

He had barely time to give a brief outline of the interview to the pantry before a violent ringing summoned him again. Sir Isaac wished to speak to Peters, Lady Harman's maid. He wanted to know where Lady Harman had gone; this being impossible, he wanted to know where Lady Harman had seemed to be going.

"Her Ladyship seemed to be going out to lunch, Sir Isaac," said Peters, her meek face irradiated by helpful intelligence.

"Oh get out!" said Sir Isaac. "Get out!"

"Yes, Sir Isaac," said Peters and obeyed....

"He's in a rare bait about her," said Peters to Snagsby downstairs.

"I'm inclined to think her ladyship will catch it pretty hot," said Snagsby.

"He can't know anything," said Peters.

"What about?" asked Snagsby.

"Oh, I don't know," said Peters. "Don't ask me about her...."

About ten minutes later Sir Isaac was heard to break a little china

figure of the goddess Kwannon, that had stood upon his study mantel-shelf. The fragments were found afterwards in the fireplace....

The desire for self-expression may become overwhelming. After Sir Isaac had talked to himself about Georgina and Lady Harman for some time in his study, he was seized with a great longing to pour some of this spirited stuff into the entirely unsympathetic ear of Mrs. Sawbridge. So he went about the house and garden looking for her, and being at last obliged to enquire about her, learnt from a scared defensive housemaid whom he cornered suddenly in the conservatory, that she had retired to her own room. He went and rapped at her door but after one muffled "Who's that?" he could get no further response.

"I want to tell you about Georgina," he said.

He tried the handle but the discreet lady within had turned the key upon her dignity.

"I want," he shouted, "to tell you about Georgina.... GEORGINA! Oh damn!"

Silence.

Tea awaited him downstairs. He hovered about the drawing-room, making noises between his teeth.

"Snagsby," said Sir Isaac, "just tell Mrs. Sawbridge I shall be obliged if she will come down to tea."

"Mrs. Sawbridge 'as a 'eadache, Sir Isaac," said Mr. Snagsby with extreme blandness. "She asked me to acquaint you. She 'as ordered tea in 'er own apartment."

For a moment Sir Isaac was baffled. Then he had an inspiration. "Just get me the Times, Snagsby," he said.

He took the paper and unfolded it until a particular paragraph was thrown into extreme prominence. This he lined about with his fountain pen and wrote above it with a quivering hand, "These women's tickets were got by Georgina under false pretences from me." He handed the paper thus prepared back to Snagsby. "Just take this paper to Mrs. Sawbridge," he said, "and ask her what she thinks of it?"

But Mrs. Sawbridge tacitly declined this proposal for a correspondence viâ Snagsby.

§7

There was no excuse for Georgina.

Georgina had obtained tickets from Sir Isaac for the great party

reception at Barleypound House, under the shallow pretext that she wanted them for "two spinsters from the country," for whose good behaviour she would answer, and she had handed them over to that organization of disorder which swayed her mind. The historical outrage upon Mr. Blapton was the consequence.

Two desperate and misguided emissaries had gone to the great reception, dressed and behaving as much as possible like helpful Liberal women; they had made their way towards the brilliant group of leading Liberals of which Mr. Blapton was the centre, assuming an almost Whig-like expression and bearing to mask the fires within, and had then suddenly accosted him. It was one of those great occasions when the rank and file of the popular party is privileged to look upon Court dress. The ministers and great people had come on from Buckingham Palace in their lace and legs. Scarlet and feathers, splendid trains and mysterious ribbons and stars, gave an agreeable intimation of all that it means to be in office to the dazzled wives and daughters of the party stalwarts and fired the ambition of innumerable earnest but earnestly competitive young men. It opened the eyes of the Labour leaders to the higher possibilities of Parliament. And then suddenly came a stir, a rush, a cry of "Tear off his epaulettes!" and outrage was afoot. And two quite nice-looking young women!

It is unhappily not necessary to describe the scene that followed. Mr. Blapton made a brave fight for his epaulettes, fighting chiefly with his cocked hat, which was bent double in the struggle. Mrs. Blapton

gave all the assistance true womanliness could offer and, in fact, she boxed the ears of one of his assailants very soundly. The intruders were rescued in an extremely torn and draggled condition from the indignant statesmen who had fallen upon them by tardy but decisive police....

Such scenes sprinkle the recent history of England with green and purple patches and the interest of this particular one for us is only because of Georgina's share in it. That was brought home to Sir Isaac, very suddenly and disagreeably, while he was lunching at the Climax Club with Sir Robert Charterson. A man named Gobbin, an art critic or something of that sort, one of those flimsy literary people who mar the solid worth of so many great clubs, a man with a lot of hair and the sort of loose tie that so often seems to be less of a tie than a detachment from all decent restraints, told him. Charterson was holding forth upon the outrage.

"That won't suit Sir Isaac, Sir Robert," said Gobbin presuming on his proximity.

Sir Isaac tried to give him a sort of look one gives to an unsatisfactory clerk.

"They went there with Sir Isaac's tickets," said Gobbin.

"They never----!"

"Horatio Blenker was looking for you in the hall. Haven't you seen him? After all the care they took. The poor man's almost in tears."

"They never had tickets of mine!" cried Sir Isaac stoutly and indignantly.

And then the thought of Georgina came like a blow upon his heart....

In his flurry he went on denying....

The subsequent conversation in the smoking-room was as red-eared and disagreeable for Sir Isaac as any conversation could be. "But how could such a thing have happened?" he asked in a voice that sounded bleached to him. "How could such a thing have come about?" Their eyes were dreadful. Did they guess? Could they guess? Conscience within him was going up and down shouting out, "Georgina, your sister-in-law, Georgina," so loudly that he felt the whole smoking-room must be hearing it....

§8

As Lady Harman came up through the darkness of the drive to her home, she was already regretting very deeply that she had not been content to talk to Mr. Brumley in Kensington Gardens instead of accepting his picturesque suggestion of Hampton Court. There was an unpleasant

waif-like feeling about this return. She was reminded of pictures published in the interests of Doctor Barnardo's philanthropies,--Dr. Barnardo her favourite hero in real life,--in which wistful little outcasts creep longingly towards brightly lit but otherwise respectable homes. It wasn't at all the sort of feeling she would have chosen if she had had a choice of feelings. She was tired and dusty and as she came into the hall the bright light was blinding. Snagsby took her wrap. "Sir Isaac, me lady, 'as been enquiring for your ladyship," he communicated.

Sir Isaac appeared on the staircase.

"Good gracious, Elly!" he shouted. "Where you been?"

Lady Harman decided against an immediate reply. "I shall be ready for dinner in half an hour," she told Snagsby and went past him to the stairs.

Sir Isaac awaited her. "Where you been?" he repeated as she came up to him.

A housemaid on the staircase and the second nursemaid on the nursery landing above shared Sir Isaac's eagerness to hear her answer. But they did not hear her answer, for Lady Harman with a movement that was all too reminiscent of her mother's in the garden, swept past him towards the door of her own room. He followed her and shut the door on the thwarted listeners.

"Here!" he said, with a connubial absence of restraint. "Where the devil you been? What the deuce do you think you've been getting up to?"

She had been calculating her answers since the moment she had realized that she was to return home at a disadvantage. (It is not my business to blame her for a certain disingenuousness; it is my business simply to record it.) "I went out to lunch at Lady Beach-Mandarin's," she said. "I told you I meant to."

"Lunch!" he cried. "Why, it's eight!"

"I met--some people. I met Agatha Alimony. I have a perfect right to go out to lunch----"

"You met a nice crew I'll bet. But that don't account for your being out to eight, does it? With all the confounded household doing as it pleases!"

"I went on--to see the borders at Hampton Court."

"With her?"

"Yes," said Lady Harman....

It wasn't what she had meant to happen. It was an inglorious declension

from her contemplated pose of dignified assertion. She was impelled to do her utmost to get away from this lie she had uttered at once, to eliminate Agatha from the argument by an emphatic generalization. "I've a perfect right," she said, suddenly nearly breathless, "to go to Hampton Court with anyone I please, talk about anything I like and stay there as long as I think fit."

He squeezed his thin lips together for a silent moment and then retorted. "You've got nothing of the sort, nothing of the sort. You've got to do your duty like everybody else in the world, and your duty is to be in this house controlling it--and not gossiping about London just where any silly fancy takes you."

"I don't think that is my duty," said Lady Harman after a slight pause to collect her forces.

"Of course it's your duty. You know it's your duty. You know perfectly well. It's only these rotten, silly, degenerate, decadent fools who've got ideas into you----" The sentence staggered under its load of adjectives like a camel under the last straw and collapsed. "See?" he said.

Lady Harman knitted her brows.

"I do my duty," she began.

But Sir Isaac was now resolved upon eloquence. His mind was full with the accumulations of an extremely long and bitter afternoon and urgent to discharge. He began to answer her and then a passion of rage flooded him. Suddenly he wanted to shout and use abusive expressions and it seemed to him there was nothing to prevent his shouting and using abusive expressions. So he did. "Call this your duty," he said, "gadding about with some infernal old suffragette----"

He paused to gather force. He had never quite let himself go to his wife before; he had never before quite let himself go to anyone. He had always been in every crisis just a little too timid to let himself go. But a wife is privileged. He sought strength and found it in words from which he had hitherto abstained. It was not a discourse to which print could do justice; it flickered from issue to issue. He touched upon Georgina, upon the stiffness of Mrs. Sawbridge's manner, upon the neurotic weakness of Georgina's unmarried state, upon the general decay of feminine virtue in the community, upon the laxity of modern literature, upon the dependent state of Lady Harman, upon the unfairness of their relations which gave her every luxury while he spent his days in arduous toil, upon the shame and annoyance in the eyes of his servants that her unexplained absence had caused him.

He emphasized his speech by gestures. He thrust out one rather large ill-shaped hand at her with two vibrating fingers extended. His ears became red, his nose red, his eyes seemed red and all about these points his face was wrathful white. His hair rose up into stiff scared

listening ends. He had his rights, he had some little claim to consideration surely, he might be just nobody but he wasn't going to stand this much anyhow. He gave her fair warning. What was she, what did she know of the world into which she wanted to rush? He lapsed into views of Lady Beach-Mandarin--unfavourable views. I wish Lady Beach-Mandarin could have heard him....

Ever and again Lady Harman sought to speak. This incessant voice confused and baffled her; she had a just attentive mind at bottom and down there was a most weakening feeling that there must indeed be some misdeed in her to evoke so impassioned a storm. She had a curious and disconcerting sense of responsibility for his dancing exasperation, she felt she was to blame for it, just as years ago she had felt she was to blame for his tears when he had urged her so desperately to marry him. Some irrational instinct made her want to allay him. It is the supreme feminine weakness, that wish to allay. But she was also clinging desperately to her resolution to proclaim her other forthcoming engagements. Her will hung on to that as a man hangs on to a mountain path in a thunderburst. She stood gripping her dressing-table and ever and again trying to speak. But whenever she did so Sir Isaac lifted a hand and cried almost threateningly: "You hear me out, Elly! You hear me out!" and went on a little faster....

(Limburger in his curious "Sexuelle Unterschiede der Seele," points out as a probably universal distinction between the sexes that when a man scolds a woman, if only he scolds loudly enough and long enough,

conviction of sin is aroused, while in the reverse case the result is merely a murderous impulse. This he further says is not understood by women, who hope by scolding to produce the similar effect upon men that they themselves would experience. The passage is illustrated by figures of ducking stools and followed by some carefully analyzed statistics of connubial crime in Berlin in the years 1901-2. But in this matter let the student compare the achievement of Paulina in The Winter's Tale and reflect upon his own life. And moreover it is difficult to estimate how far the twinges of conscience that Lady Harman was feeling were not due to an entirely different cause, the falsification of her position by the lie she had just told Sir Isaac.)

And presently upon this noisy scene in the great pink bedroom, with Sir Isaac walking about and standing and turning and gesticulating and Lady Harman clinging on to her dressing-table, and painfully divided between her new connections, her sense of guilty deception and the deep instinctive responsibilities of a woman's nature, came, like one of those rows of dots that are now so frequent and so helpful in the art of fiction, the surging, deep, assuaging note of Snagsby's gong: Booooooom. Boom. Booooooom....

"Damn it!" cried Sir Isaac, smiting at the air with both fists clenched and speaking as though this was Ellen's crowning misdeed, "and we aren't even dressed for dinner!"

§9

Dinner had something of the stiffness of court ceremonial.

Mrs. Sawbridge, perhaps erring on the side of discretion, had consumed a little soup and a wing of chicken in her own room. Sir Isaac was down first and his wife found him grimly astride before the great dining-room fire awaiting her. She had had her dark hair dressed with extreme simplicity and had slipped on a blue velvet tea-gown, but she had been delayed by a visit to the nursery, where the children were now flushed and uneasily asleep.

Husband and wife took their places at the genuine Sheraton dining-table--one of the very best pieces Sir Isaac had ever picked up--and were waited on with a hushed, scared dexterity by Snagsby and the footman.

Lady Harman and her husband exchanged no remarks during the meal; Sir Isaac was a little noisy with his soup as became a man who controls honest indignation, and once he complained briefly in a slightly hoarse voice to Snagsby about the state of one of the rolls. Between the courses he leant back in his chair and made faint sounds with his teeth. These were the only breach of the velvety quiet. Lady Harman was surprised to discover herself hungry, but she ate with thoughtful dignity and gave her mind to the attempted digestion of the confusing interview she had just been through.

It was a very indigestible interview.

On the whole her heart hardened again. With nourishment and silence her spirit recovered a little from its abasement, and her resolution to assert her freedom to go hither and thither and think as she chose renewed itself. She tried to plan some way of making her declaration so that she would not again be overwhelmed by a torrent of response. Should she speak to him at the end of dinner? Should she speak to him while Snagsby was in the room? But he might behave badly even with Snagsby in the room and she could not bear to think of him behaving badly to her in the presence of Snagsby. She glanced at him over the genuine old silver bowl of roses in the middle of the table--all the roses were good new sorts--and tried to estimate how he might behave under various methods of declaration.

The dinner followed its appointed ritual to the dessert. Came the wine and Snagsby placed the cigars and a little silver lamp beside his master.

She rose slowly with a speech upon her lips. Sir Isaac remained seated looking up at her with a mitigated fury in his little red-brown eyes.

The speech receded from her lips again.

"I think," she said after a strained pause, "I will go and see how

mother is now."

"She's only shamming," said Sir Isaac belatedly to her back as she went out of the room.

She found her mother in a wrap before her fire and made her dutiful enquiries.

"It's only quite a slight headache," Mrs. Sawbridge confessed. "But Isaac was so upset about Georgina and about"--she flinched--"about--everything, that I thought it better to be out of the way."

"What exactly has Georgina done?"

"It's in the paper, dear. On the table there."

Ellen studied the Times.

"Georgina got them the tickets," Mrs. Sawbridge explained. "I wish she hadn't. It was so--so unnecessary of her."

There was a little pause as Lady Harman read. She put down the paper and asked her mother if she could do anything for her.

"I--I suppose it's all Right, dear, now?" Mrs. Sawbridge asked.

"Quite," said her daughter. "You're sure I can do nothing for you, mummy?"

"I'm kept so in the dark about things."

"It's quite all right now, mummy."

"He went on--dreadfully."

"It was annoying--of Georgina."

"It makes my position so difficult. I do wish he wouldn't want to speak to me--about all these things.... Georgina treats me like a Perfect Nonentity and then he comes----It's so inconsiderate. Starting Disputes. Do you know, dear, I really think--if I were to go for a little time to Bournemouth----?"

Her daughter seemed to find something attractive in the idea. She came to the hearthrug and regarded her mother with maternal eyes.

"Don't you worry about things, mummy," she said.

"Mrs. Bleckhorn told me of such a nice quiet boarding-house, almost looking on the sea.... One would be safe from Insult there. You know----" her voice broke for a moment, "he was Insulting, he meant to

be Insulting. I'm--Upset. I've been thinking over it ever since."

§10

Lady Harman came out upon the landing. She felt absolutely without backing in the world. (If only she hadn't told a lie!) Then with an effort she directed her course downstairs to the dining-room.

(The lie had been necessary. It was only a detail. It mustn't blind her to the real issue.)

She entered softly and found her husband standing before the fire plunged in gloomy thoughts. Upon the marble mantel-shelf behind him was a little glass; he had been sipping port in spite of the express prohibition of his doctor and the wine had reddened the veins of his eyes and variegated the normal pallor of his countenance with little flushed areas. "Hel-lo," he said looking up suddenly as she closed the door behind her.

For a moment there was something in their two expressions like that on the faces of men about to box.

"I want you to understand," she said, and then; "The way you behaved----"

There was an uncontrollable break in her voice. She had a dreadful feeling that she might be going to cry. She made a great effort to be cold and clear.

"I don't think you have a right--just because I am your wife--to control every moment of my time. In fact you haven't. And I have a right to make engagements.... I want you to know I am going to an afternoon meeting at Lady Beach-Mandarin's. Next week. And I have promised to go to Miss Alimony's to tea."

"Go on," he encouraged grimly.

"I am going to Lady Viping's to dinner, too; she asked me and I accepted. Later."

She stopped.

He seemed to deliberate. Then suddenly he thrust out a face of pinched determination.

"You won't, my lady," he said. "You bet your life you won't. No! So now then!"

And then gripping his hands more tightly behind him, he made a step towards her.

"You're losing your bearings, Lady Harman," he said, speaking with much intensity in a low earnest voice. "You don't seem to be remembering where you are. You come and you tell me you're going to do this and that. Don't you know, Lady Harman, that it's your wifely duty to obey, to do as I say, to behave as I wish?" He brought out a lean index finger to emphasize his remarks. "And I am going to make you do it!" he said.

"I've a perfect right," she repeated.

He went on, regardless of her words. "What do you think you can do, Lady Harman? You're going to all these places--how? Not in my motor-car, not with my money. You've not a thing that isn't mine, that I haven't given you. And if you're going to have a lot of friends I haven't got, where're they coming to see you? Not in my house! I'll chuck 'em out if I find 'em. I won't have 'em. I'll turn 'em out. See?"

"I'm not a slave."

"You're a wife--and a wife's got to do what her husband wishes. You can't have two heads on a horse. And in this horse--this house I mean, the head's--me!"

"I'm not a slave and I won't be a slave."

"You're a wife and you'll stick to the bargain you made when you married me. I'm ready in reason to give you anything you want--if you do your

duty as a wife should. Why!--I spoil you. But this going about on your own, this highty-flighty go-as-you-please,--no man on earth who's worth calling a man will stand it. I'm not going to begin to stand it.... You try it on. You try it, Lady Harman.... You'll come to your senses soon enough. See? You start trying it on now--straight away. We'll make an experiment. We'll watch how it goes. Only don't expect me to give you any money, don't expect me to help your struggling family, don't expect me to alter my arrangements because of you. Let's keep apart for a bit and you go your way and I'll go mine. And we'll see who's sick of it first, we'll see who wants to cry off."

"I came down here," said Lady Harman, "to give you a reasonable notice----"

"And you found I could reason too," interrupted Sir Isaac in a kind of miniature shout, "you found I could reason too!"

"You think----Reason! I won't," said Lady Harman, and found herself in tears. By an enormous effort she recovered something of her dignity and withdrew. He made no effort to open the door, but stood a little hunchbacked and with a sense of rhetorical victory surveying her retreat.

§11

After Lady Harman's maid had left her that night, she sat for some time in a low easy chair before her fire, trying at first to collect together into one situation all the events of the day and then lapsing into that state of mind which is not so much thinking as resting in the attitude of thought. Presently, in a vaguely conceived future, she would go to bed. She was stunned by the immense dimensions of the row her simple act of defiance had evoked.

And then came an incredible incident, so incredible that next day she still had great difficulty in deciding whether it was an actuality or a dream. She heard a little very familiar sound. It was the last sound she would have expected to hear and she turned sharply when she heard it. The paper-covered door in the wall of her husband's apartment opened softly, paused, opened some more and his little undignified head appeared. His hair was already tumbled from his pillow.

He regarded her steadfastly for some moments with an expression between shame and curiosity and smouldering rage, and then allowed his body, clad now in purple-striped pyjamas, to follow his head into her room. He advanced guiltily.

"Elly," he whispered. "Elly!"

She caught her dressing-gown about her and stood up.

"What is it, Isaac?" she asked, feeling curiously abashed at this

invasion.

"Elly," he said, still in that furtive undertone. "Make it up!"

"I want my freedom," she said, after a little pause.

"Don't be silly, Elly," he whispered in a tone of remonstrance and advancing slowly towards her. "Make it up. Chuck all these ideas."

She shook her head.

"We've got to get along together. You can't go going about just anywhere. We've got--we've got to be reasonable."

He halted, three paces away from her. His eyes weren't sorrowful eyes, or friendly eyes; they were just shiftily eager eyes. "Look here," he said. "It's all nonsense.... Elly, old girl; let's--let's make it up."

She looked at him and it dawned upon her that she had always imagined herself to be afraid of him and that indeed she wasn't. She shook her head obstinately.

"It isn't reasonable," he said. "Here, we've been the happiest of people----Anything in reason I'll let you have." He paused with an effect of making an offer.

"I want my autonomy," she said.

"Autonomy!" he echoed. "Autonomy! What's autonomy? Autonomy!"

This strange word seemed first to hold him in distressful suspense and then to infuriate him.

"I come in here to make it up," he said, with a voice charged with griefs, "after all you've done, and you go and you talk of autonomy!"

His feelings passed beyond words. An extremity of viciousness flashed into his face. He gave vent to a snarl of exasperation, "Ya-ap!" he said, he raised his clenched fists and seemed on the verge of assault, and then with a gesture between fury and despair, he wheeled about and the purple-striped pyjamas danced in passionate retreat from her room.

"Autonomy!..."

A slam, a noise of assaulted furniture, and then silence.

Lady Harman stood for some moments regarding the paper-covered door that had closed behind him. Then she bared her white forearm and pinched it--hard.

It wasn't a dream! This thing had happened.

§12

At a quarter to three in the morning, Lady Harman was surprised to find herself wide awake. It was exactly a quarter to three when she touched the stud of the ingenious little silver apparatus upon the table beside her bed which reflected a luminous clock-face upon the ceiling. And her mind was no longer resting in the attitude of thought but extraordinarily active. It was active, but as she presently began to realize it was not progressing. It was spinning violently round and round the frenzied figure of a little man in purple-striped pyjamas retreating from her presence, whirling away from her like something blown before a gale. That seemed to her to symbolize the completeness of the breach the day had made between her husband and herself.

She felt as a statesman might feel who had inadvertently--while conducting some trivial negotiations--declared war.

She was profoundly alarmed. She perceived ahead of her abundant possibilities of disagreeable things. And she wasn't by any means as convinced of the righteousness of her cause as a happy warrior should be. She had a natural disposition towards truthfulness and it worried her mind that while she was struggling to assert her right to these common social freedoms she should be tacitly admitting a kind of justice in her husband's objections by concealing the fact that her afternoon's companion was a man. She tried not to recognize the existence of a

doubt, but deep down in her mind there did indeed lurk a weakening uncertainty about the right of a woman to free conversation with any man but her own. Her reason disowned that uncertainty with scorn. But it wouldn't go away for all her reason. She went about in her mind doing her utmost to cut that doubt dead....

She tried to go back to the beginning and think it all out. And as she was not used to thinking things out, the effort took the form of an imaginary explanation to Mr. Brumley of the difficulties of her position. She framed phrases. "You see, Mr. Brumley," she imagined herself to be saying, "I want to do my duty as a wife, I have to do my duty as a wife. But it's so hard to say just where duty leaves off and being a mere slave begins. I cannot believe that blind obedience is any woman's duty. A woman needs--autonomy." Then her mind went off for a time to a wrestle with the exact meaning of autonomy, an issue that had not arisen hitherto in her mind.... And as she planned out such elucidations, there grew more and more distinct in her mind a kind of idealized Mr. Brumley, very grave, very attentive, wonderfully understanding, saying illuminating helpful tonic things, that made everything clear, everything almost easy. She wanted someone of that quality so badly. The night would have been unendurable if she could not have imagined Mr. Brumley of that quality. And imagining him of that quality her heart yearned for him. She felt that she had been terribly inexpressive that afternoon, she had shirked points, misstated points, and yet he had been marvellously understanding. Ever and again his words had seemed to pierce right through what she had been saying to what she

had been thinking. And she recalled with peculiar comfort a kind of abstracted calculating look that had come at times into his eyes, as though his thoughts were going ever so much deeper and ever so much further than her blundering questionings could possibly have taken them. He weighed every word, he had a guarded way of saying "Um...."

Her thoughts came back to the dancing little figure in purple-striped pyjamas. She had a scared sense of irrevocable breaches. What would he do to-morrow? What should she do to-morrow? Would he speak to her at breakfast or should she speak first to him?... She wished she had some money. If she could have foreseen all this she would have got some money before she began....

So her mind went on round and round and the dawn was breaking before she slept again.

§13

Mr. Brumley, also, slept little that night. He was wakefully mournful, recalling each ungraceful incident of the afternoon's failure in turn and more particularly his dispute with the ticket clerk, and thinking over all the things he might have done--if only he hadn't done the things he had done. He had made an atrocious mess of things. He felt he had hopelessly shattered the fair fabric of impressions of him that Lady Harman had been building up, that image of a wise humane capable man to

whom a woman would gladly turn; he had been flurried, he had been incompetent, he had been ridiculously incompetent, and it seemed to him that life was a string of desolating inadequacies and that he would never smile again.

The probable reception of Lady Harman by her husband never came within his imaginative scope. Nor did the problems of social responsibility that Lady Harman had been trying to put to him exercise him very greatly. The personal disillusionment was too strong for that.

About half-past four a faint ray of comfort came with the consideration that after all a certain practical incapacity is part of the ensemble of a literary artist, and then he found himself wondering what flowers of wisdom Montaigne might not have culled from such a day's experience; he began an imitative essay in his head and he fell asleep upon this at last at about ten minutes past five in the morning.

There were better things than this in the composition of Mr. Brumley, we shall have to go deep into these reserves before we have done with him, but when he had so recently barked the shins of his self-esteem they had no chance at all.